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MAX MORATH - SEE PAGE 4

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RAGTIME...
UNDER YOUR HAT

THE RAGTIME SOCIETY is a non-profit organization for people interested in Ragtime. Services include the publication of this magazine about all phases of classic Ragtime, the printing of sheet music, and maintenance of hard-to-find Ragtime books and records. We also record on our own label and associate label, bringing you performances of both old and new Ragtime.

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Last issue, in our editorial, we mentioned that a few members had written suggesting that we broaden our scope. It appears that we hit on a real controversial issue here, judging from the number of letters that we have received. As promised, we have published on pages 30 - 35 inclusive a random cross-section of replies.

We will be introducing a forward look in our first issue for 1968. An exciting new cover for THE RAGTIMER has been conceived by Jack Thompson of Detroit, who incidentally, designed the derby hat logo for THE RAGTIME SOCIETY some time ago. More about Jack and his creativity next issue.

This publication is a combine of issues 5 & 6 and is intended to be the fulfilment of our commitments for 1967.

Special thanks to the contributore:
Robert R. Darch for Blind Boone: A Sensational Missourian Forgotten (originally published in the Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society - April, 1961); Olga Curtis for The Ragtime Music of Max Morath (originally published in the Sunday Empire - February 27, 1966); Trebor Tichenor and Bob Wright for their musical analysis of Scott Joplin's "EUGENIA"; David Jasen for his article 'Ragtime - A Re-Evaluation'; and Alice Green for The Joplin Kid II.

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THE RAGTIME MUSIC OF

Max Morath

by

OLGA CURTIS

They laugh when Max Morath sits down at the piano, with derby hat, gold-buttoned vest, garters on his sleeves and a fat cigar clenched in his teeth. But as long as they applaud when he starts playing ragtime, Morath doesn't mind.

Applause for his ragtime moved this Colorado entertainer from a melodrama theatre to an educational TV show, and from there to network television and radio. Last year, more applause moved him from Denver to New York, where he's making five times as much money as he did there. Morath has no objections to fame and fortune, but he'd like the folks back home to know that he left Colorado for music, not just money.

"Sure, I like making money," he admits. "If I couldn't feed the family, I'd quit performing.

"But there are more people in New York, and that means I can get more engagements, which is important because I'm trying to sell a new form of entertainment."

The entertainment Max is peddling may be novel in the big city, but Coloradans have bought it enthusiastically for 15 years. In Colorado Springs, Pueblo, Cripple Creek, Denver - wherever this lanky piano player has performed in person, on radio or on TV - Max Morath is synonymous with ragtime. The late Larry Tajiri, drama critic of The Denver Post, predicted that Morath might someday do for ragtime music what another Coloradan, Paul Whiteman, did for jazz.

Now the New York critics are beginning to make similar comments, and several million more people can identify the music that Max prefers to call "rag". To Morath, who has a missionary zeal on the subject, that's what counts.

"Rag deserves a new orientation," he explains. "Most people have a sterotyped idea of it as something that needs red wallpaper and booze. That's not necessarily true, even though my get-up adds to the illusion.

"Rag is the last big untapped reservoir of Americana in music. In fact, it's the first characteristic American music to come out of this country's melting pot years. I like to call it the folk music of the city, and I think it can be as commercially popular as folk singers or the Beatles.

"Some day I'd like to play it without the sleeve garters and the cigars and have people just listen.

"Meantime, if dressing up helps me sneak in a little information with the music, fine. Rag is fresh, vital entertainment, and I want to have a hand in breaking it loose."

When an entertainer tells you he practices his art for art's sake, one might suspect it's a show business gimmick.

Morath's regard for ragtime music is genuine. He's been loopy about it since he was a boy in Colorado Springs. His modesty about his own contribution to the revival of ragtime is also real: Morath is the kind of professional piano player who insures his piano, not his hands.

What is ragtime, exactly? Ask Max Morath that question in his New York rehearsal studio, and you get a one-hour lecture on the subject, two books to read for background, and a lively piano rendition of Three Blind Mice, plain and syncopated.

Boiled down, here's how Morath explains it:

"Rag dates from the turn of the century, like jazz and blues. It was, and is, strictly for piano, while jazz is for horns and blues is for voice.

"Rag came out of city saloons and sporting houses, in the days when America was teeming with minority groups. Some of the early rags were cruel commentaries, and you couldn't do any of them today with the original words. There was one about Italians called Wop, Wop, Wop and a lot of so-called 'coon' songs. Many of the rag songs were written by Negroes and published, oddly enough, by an Irishman in St. Louis and two Jews in New York.

"A lot of people think ragtime is fast music, but it's supposed to be played in slow march tempo. In fact, a lot of the old sheet music I own is marked 'Do not play fast.'

"What makes rag a distinct type of music is that it is totally syncopated.

"Syncopation is the placing of an accent in music where it doesn't naturally fall, against the basic rhythm. Rag is music that is syncopated throughout, with the left hand playing the steady rhythm and the right hand providing the syncopation or accent."

Ragtime music and the kind of life that created it both disappeared with World War I, and ragtime was commercially dead long before Max Morath was born.

So how did this college-educated musician, who looks like a surprised six-foot leprechaun and talks like a professor, become an expert in rag?

"Dumb luck, curiosity and osmosis," says Morath with a grin. "My mother played piano for the silent movies and made sure her sons knew how to play, too. We had an old upright at home, and a lot of sheet music. First I was interested in the sound, and then I got wrapped up in the history of rag."

Old-timers in Colorado Springs may remember when Mrs. Gladys Morath played the piano for the flickers at the Princess Theatre there. (The theatre, renamed the Ute, is now scheduled for demolition, and Mrs. Morath today is better known as the society editor of the Colorado Springs Gazette-Telegraph.)

Max was born Oct. 1, 1926, and all he remembers of his boyhood musically is being subjected to piano lessons at age 7.

"My teacher was Mrs. Gladys Wardwell, who was a fine teacher and still is, but I was like every other kid - I hated to practice. My older brother Fred, who still lives in the Springs, was the really good pianist."

Max was 15 before he showed any serious interest in music.

"I formed a barbershop quartet with classmates at Colorado Springs High, and since we couldn't find any arrangements, I did the arranging. And we sounded horrible.

"So I began taking lessons in musical theory from Robert Gross, who was then an instructor at Colorado College."

To finance his lessons, Max mowed lawns, scraped paint, and sang baritone with a teen-aged trio whose main claim to fame was that you could hire all three for $5 a night. By the time he was graduated from high school, Morath had a partial scholarship to CC, a part-time job with KVOR in Colorado Springs, and a wholehearted passion for music.

His 75-cents-an-hour disc jockey stint for KVOR taught him microphone technique, though Max likes to remember best his handling of a musical quiz show called "Name it and you can have it."

"That was only 20 years ago," he says, "but if you want to know how times have changed, the show was then considered a big give-away. We gave away one phonograph record a night."

Morath was graduated from CC in 1948 (he earned his B.A. in English because they "didn't have a ragtime major") and tried to get a job in Denver radio. He was told Denver stations had long waiting lists of experienced applicants who wanted to move to Colorado for health reasons, so he turned south.

And late in 1948, KGFH in Pueblo launched him on his present career. "They paid me $60 a week as a staff announcer and let me have a piano show of my own, and I felt like a king."

He kept playing, and studying. He took radio and night club jobs, tried producing, selling, writing - but kept returning to ragtime.

"I think it crystalized for me in 1950, when I first worked for the Imperial Players melodrama in Cripple Creek," he says. "I went only because summer jobs in radio were scarce. I planned to stay only one season, but the chance to play turn-of-the-century music was exciting and I finally went back a few years later."

Marriage in 1953 to Norma Tackett, a singer and former CC student who was working at Cripple Creek, helped influence his decision. From 1954 to 1959, Morath was the piano player in the basement melodrama at Cripple Creek - and one of the most enthusiastic antique hunters in Colorado. He prowled through junk stores for ragtime piano rolls,

borrowed old sheet music, interviewed surviving ragtime pianists and also undertook a serious study of the social history of the United States during the ragtime era - roughly 1890 to 1920.

"I don't think anybody recognized me as a musician, but every library and historical society around sure got to know me," Morath recalls.

The result was a new kind of musical act - ragtime with social commentary - and it brought him his big break. In 1959, he was asked to research, write and perform a series of programs for Denver's educational TV station, KRMA. The show was called The Ragtime Era. Released in 1960, it was so good that commercial TV stations bought it for entertainment. Morath had sold rights to the series to KRMA, so he realized no income from the commercial TV showings.

For Morath, the show was a labor of love. He spent nearly a year putting together 12 programs at $225 a program. To subsidize the work, and feed his growing family, he performed chewing gum commercials, took convention entertainment jobs and did shows for college groups.

One job led to another, most of them in various parts of the country, and Morath moved to Denver in 1960 to make his traveling easier.

"By 1964 I was beginning to feel like Denver's longest commuter. I was gone fifty percent of the time, and saw the children by flying from New York to Denver on weekends. I figured there was no point in making money if I couldn't have my family with me. Norma and I didn't want to leave Denver, especially since our two oldest children were in Cherry Hills Elementary School, and we think that's one of the best in the west. But finally we had to move."

After 15 years hard work, Morath left no part of his "Eastern launching" to chance. He borrowed $20,000 from two local banks, the Denver-U.S. National and the First National of Englewood, to finance his transition from Colorado musician to New York corporation. With the money, he was able to rent a rehearsal studio, hire musicians, and under the name of Normacks, Inc. offer an act called "The Original Ragtime Quartet," featuring himself and three other musicians, as well as Max Morath, solo.

The Moraths and their three children, Kathy, 10, Christy, 9, and Fred, 4, now live in Mountvale, N.J. a one-hour bus ride from his studio in midtown Manhattan.

The bulk of Morath's income these days comes from convention and college shows. He prefers Eastern bookings to stay close to his family, but doesn't mind Colorado engagements because they give him a chance to catch up with his mother and brother. He appears occasionally on network TV and radio, and hopes to get a TV show of his own so he can eventually stay in one place.

When not actually performing, he's in his studio playing and composing. Morath devotes much time to up-dating old rags "trying to find a combination of sounds that young people will listen to as ragtime."

"Nostalgia doesn't mean a thing to the modern audience," he explains. "They're

just not interested in what their parents liked - and darn few parents alive today ever heard real ragtime."

The only "nostalgic" note in his white-painted studio is an old Victrola. Morath rehearses his turn-of-the-century songs on a new grand piano, and does the paperwork involved in his ragtime shows via dictaphone and electric typewriter.

Morath doesn't smoke, except on stage, and he's not a party type. Yet when performing some heart-render like Take Back the Engagement Ring, or a rouser like the Hippocampus Two Step, he manages to look exactly like a piano player in a 1900 bordello is supposed to.

This isn't exactly the image Morath wants to project for ragtime, but he's becoming reconciled to his striped suit and derby.

"Rag deserves a new and better image," he says. "I'd like to get the rinky-tink out of it, but first you have to make people appreciate it. If that take cigars, I'll smoke cigars."

NOTE:

BE SURE TO SEE THE INSIDE FRONT COVER FOR INFORMATION ON A NEW RECORD RELEASE FEATURING MAX MORATH.

IMPORTANT MEMBERSHIP NOTICE

HAVE YOU SENT IN YOUR ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL? AS IN THE PAST, MEMBERSHIP IN THE RAGTIME SOCIETY EXTENDS FROM JANUARY 1ST - DECEMBER 31ST INCLUSIVE. MEMBERSHIP DUES, BY NECESSITY, HAVE BEEN INCREASED TO $5.00 PER YEAR (see editorial, THE RAGTIMER, VOLUME 6 NO. 4) CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE RAGTIME SOCIETY IN 1968 BY RENEWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP PROMPTLY.

"BLIND" BOONE:

A SENSATIONAL MISSOURIAN FORGOTTEN

by

ROBERT R. DARCH

Throughout Missouri there is a growing awareness and a rising surge of pride in the role that this state has played in the history and development of American music. Foremost is Missouri's now documented right to claim itself as the birthplace of Ragtime music - Classical Ragtime from which The Blues, Dixieland, and all other forms of modern American music originated - pure syncopation of Negro origin, with its roots planted unquestionably in Missouri folk music.

For researchers, it has been a quest for truth that would categorically overrule the long presumption that Ragtime had its beginning in New Orleans. It has been a mission to shatter the stigma upon Ragtime as cornball music from a "rinky-tink" piano, and to present that music for what it was: the carefully manuscripted work of excellent, dedicated composers - compositions that conveyed a new idea, a revolutionary beat and sound in music - compositions of concerto stature.

In the process of finding the truth and making it known, these musical historians unearthed an unbelievable array of great and forgotten talent. They came upon composers and musicians whose fame varied from purely local to truly international. Some enjoyed success strictly within the framework of the Ragtime era, from the mid-1890's to 1917. Some outlasted the era and soared to new highs of personal success with the changing times and the "Roaring Twenties." There was Scott Joplin of Sedalia; James Scott of Carthage; Percy Wenrich of Joplin; Arthur Marshall of Kansas City; Tom Turpin of the Rosebud Cafe in St. Louis; Theron Bennett of Pierce City; Brunson Campbell, Joseph Lamb, and Louis Chauvin.

But as the Civil War was ending, in a Federal camp of the 7th Militia, at Miami, Saline County, Missouri, John William Boone was born to Rachel Boone, a contraband, cooking for the soldiers. His father was a bugler in the army. (Rachel Boone was born in Kentucky as a slave, and belonged to the descendants of Daniel Boone. Thus was the surname acquired.)

It was May 17, 1864, and little "Willie" Boone was ill almost from the day of his birth with a severe brain fever. When he was six months old, surgeons removed both his eyes in order to save his life. His mother worked in local homes in Warrensburg to support herself and the child who, surmounting almost impossible odds, was to become the most brilliant musician of his generation.

Unlike his sightless predecessor "Blind" Tom, whose uncontrolled body had to be strapped to a piano bench, John William Boone was no freak, no spectacle for a curious public. It was true that he was totally blind from infancy, and that after scarcely a year of formal musical training he could master any musical composition. But it was his superb artistry as a pianist and composer, his abundant personal warmth, and his

astuteness as a showman that packed concert halls throughout the United States and Canada from 1880 well into the present century.

Nevertheless, the story of "Blind" Boone, particularly the saga of his early years, reads almost like a melodrama of that era. It is the story of a poverty-stricken, sightless coloured boy - an urchin of the city streets who is kidnapped and exploited by cruel masters, won and lost in a card game, and after a brief education strikes out on his own, rising to become an outstanding musician and to amass a great personal fortune.

As a child in Warrensburg, little "Willie" Boone became a neighborhood favorite. By the age of three, he was attracting considerable attention with his perfect sense of rhythm. The sound of music delighted him. His first instrument was a tin whistle. On it he would play tunes that he heard, compose original melodies, and imitate the calls of birds and animals on the family farm.

When Boone was about seven years old, Columbus Morrow, for many years Chief Clerk of the United States Senate, gave him a mouth harp. With this most precious possession, the lad organized a troupe of ragged urchins into a band - two tin whistles, the mouth harp, and a triangle. Willie was the leader. They played on the streets on picnic days and for any local gathering. Pennies and nickels were tossed at the feet of the merry and popular urchins, which helped in Boone's family's household of many children and small means.

When Boone was eight, his mother had married Harrison Hendrix, an early settler of Warrensburg, Missouri. The Hendrix home is recalled by Mrs. Melissa Fuell-Cuther:[1] "The house was a one-room log cabin with the old puncheon floor; very scantily furnished with the real necessities of life as it took much of the space for Mr. Hendrix's large family." And in her childhood memories of "Willie" Boone, Mrs. Cuther writes: "Although but a chap, little Willie would often sit and dream of a spacious two-story home he aimed to own when he grew to be a man. He would not worry his mother with his anxiety, but did all he could to help her share the humble condition."

When he was nine, Willie's mother became concerned for his education. A community which had grown to love the happy waif banded together to provide clothing, tuition, and railroad fare to send the little blind boy to St. Louis, and the only school for the blind in the area. It was there that Boone began to study music - the piano - and where he was immediately recognized as a musical genius, a natural musician. In less

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1. Of all who gave their time, knowledge, personal recollections and records so that the life story of "blind" Boone could be compiled for later presentation in comprehensive form, we must acknowledge the role of Mrs. Melissa Fuell-Cuther. Forty-five years ago, Mrs. Cuther set down a charming account of the early life and achievements of her childhood friend, "Willie" Boone. It is the researcher's priceless guide, valued second only to tape recordings made during personal interviews with Mrs. Cuther, who was for many years associated with the Blind Boone Concert Company. In setting forth this brief account of the story of a legendary Missourian and in recalling the stature which Boone achieved for himself, his race, and his beloved state, one thing is certain. If Boone gains recognition in this generation, it will be largely due to the foresight of this gentle lady and the mission which she undertook nearly half a century ago.

than a year, he mastered the piano. He could play any composition upon listening to it once.

But in the beginning of his second year at school in St. Louis, the teaching staff changed. Young Boone became unhappy. He began slipping away at night to wander the streets of the city. For this and missing classes he was expelled. Rather than go home, the lad turned to the tenant belt of St. Louis, where he once again played in the streets. Finally, homeless and penniless - barely twelve years old - the blind lad was taken home to Warrensburg by a train conductor whom he had befriended.

At home he was given a job playing for local school students as they marched to and from classes. He re-organized his street band and worked the picnics and fairs. At a fair, he met a man named Mark Cromwell, who talked of travel, adventure, fame and fortune. Boone went away with Cromwell - not to the promised life of excitement, but to a life of cruelty and bondage.

Cromwell worked the boy in the streets for money which unknowing passers-by would contribute to the ragged, hungry musician. Just as Boone's stepfather drew close in the pursuit of Cromwell, the boy was gambled off in a card game to one Sam Reiter. Thus he was passed from one cruel master to one even more cruel, until Cromwell stole him back, and Hendrix at last caught up with his son's captor.

Young Boone was once again in Warrensburg, but he had tasted life, and for all that it was a bitter taste, he was no longer satisfied to stay at home. He decided to leave again and make his own way. On a train he met Tom Johnson, a banjo picker, and Ben Franklin, who called himself "The Tea Cup Artist." Franklin would put a mouth harp in a tea cup, creating a novel warbling tone. They formed a trio - an unlikely but successful trio - performing on railroad trains and at whistle stops between Mexico and Glasgow, Missouri. The trio disbanded over financial difficulties when they could not agree on the division of tips.

In 1877, young Boone met John Lange, Jr., of Columbia, Missouri, who was to become his great friend, partner, and personal manager. So integrated are the lives of Boone and Lange from the time of their first meeting that any reference to Boone (from 1877 to Lange's death in 1916) automatically implies the words "and Lange." Lange himself was such a powerful figure in his time, and such a humanitarian, that his story must be told separately, lest his greatness be overshadowed by the glory that was publicly Boone's.

In 1880, the first concert by "Blind" Boone was given in Columbia, Missouri. This was followed by a long and trying series of engagements throughout Missouri, and great financial difficulties. But gradually the fifteen-year-old musical genius and his undaunted friend gained recognition.

In 1885, the Blind Boone Concert Company was formed, bringing together over the next thirty years some of the finest talent of the Midwest - excellent musicians and singers. But like the maestro himself, most of them are forgotten in this generation.

As his fame grew, Boone devoted more and more time to mastering hundreds of musical compositions. This he would do by having artists play for him - as many as

three concerts weekly. So precise was his memory that he could play back a performed work after hearing it once, even to the errors of the performing artist. Later, he used mechanical reproductions of music for his listening, so that his interpretation would be perfect.

Mrs. Cuther describes Boone: "When he first began his career, he was of a very slim frame, weighing less than one hundred and twenty pounds. About the age of twenty, he began to take on flesh and weighed, in his fifty-first year, 260 pounds. He is five feet in height, and very supple and active. His hands are short with delicately formed fingers, small feet, large head, with the same lines and shape as Beethoven's. He has a rich mulatto complexion and long, black curly hair, silken and wavy, touched with a tint of grey."

Records of the Company, up to 1915, show thirty-five years of concert work, ten months each year, with six concerts weekly. Boone wore out sixteen pianos on his own in the course of his work.

Boone made his home in Columbia, Missouri, in a stately ten-room house that still stands in the Negro district. In October, 1889, he married his childhood sweetheart, Eugenia Lange, youngest sister of his partner and manager. She traveled with Boone throughout the United States and Canada.

Boone, of course, became personally wealthy and acquired large land and building holdings throughout Missouri. He was known to be as generous as he was wealthy - a dedicated churchman - an avid participant in lodge and fraternal work. He was, for example, a 32nd Degree Scottish Rite Mason.

In addition to his success as a musician and concert artist, "Blind" Boone became a highly successful composer of both classical-type music and of simpler songs and melodies that reflected the struggles and triumphs of his race. He was also a Ragtime composer of some distinction. While his compositions, reviewed today, maintain their excellence, they did not generally achieve sustaining prominence beyond the era when he was known as a performer.

Above all, Boone was a performing concert pianist - a true showman whose "audience-sense" and "wit" is recalled by Mrs. Cuther: "Sometimes when he was playing a concert, he would sense that his selections were too heavy and that they were going over the heads of the people. Boone would stop whatever he was playing, look at the audience with that merry twinkle and say, "All right, then, we'll put the cookies on the lower shelf," and bring down the house with a rollicking rag."

To all but a few older residents of Missouri communities where he performed, "Blind" Boone is today forgotten. Yet he has been proclaimed as one of the most remarkable musicians this country has produced. Boone died quietly at his home, 10 North Fourth Street, Columbia, Missouri, on October 4, 1927. Three days later, in a chilly fall rain, he was buried in the Boone family plot in Columbia Cemetery, while jazz-singer Margaret Day sang "I Done My Work." His stately home is now a funeral parlor. His grand piano sat for years in the Assembly Hall of the Fred W. W. Douglass School in Columbia. Recently it was fully restored, and was used by the present author in a special concert of "Blind" Boone's works, given in Columbia March 15, 1961, under

the sponsorship of the Blind Boone Memorial Foundation. This group was organized under the leadership of State Senator A. Baser Vanlandingham, for the purpose of establishing a suitable memorial to John William "Blind" Boone. In addition to a suitable marker for his grave, and some other memorial in the town of Columbia, they hope to establish a scholarship fund for Missouri young people in the fields of music and fine arts, as the best possible memorial to the brilliant musician.

"Blind" Boone is part of the musical and cultural heritage of Missouri and of America herself. If there is justification that he is forgotten; if there is no time for taking pride that he lived and was himself worthy of international acclaim as a man and an artist - then we can seek consolation for letting this be so only in the fact that Boone's obscurity is shared by many great Missouri men of equal stature. Their work and fame are also forgotten.

Perhaps there is a message in this obscurity which we have permitted. Our history as a country - our cultural heritage - is too short in years to permit us to bypass the "Blind" Boones, the Scott Joplins, the Scotts, the Wenrichs, and the Tom Turpins. We can ill afford to set aside the very basis from which one of our few truly national possessions has emerged, that being American music.

CHARLES LUCKEYETH (LUCKEY) ROBERTS (1893 - 1968)

It is with regret that we announce the passing of Luckey Roberts.

Luckey was born in Philadelphia on August 7, 1893. At five years old, he was on the vaudeville circuit. His first job as a pianist came when he turned six,- playing in a carnival show. Later, in the '20s, he headed one of the most successful society orchestras in the eastern United States. From 1942 to 1954, he had his own club in Harlem called the Rendezvous. Probably his best recorded performances were for the Circle label in 1946.

His ragtime compositions include Junk Man Rag(1913), Pork and Beans(1913), Music Box Rag(1914), Palm Beach(1914), Shy and Sly(1915), Helter Skelter(1915), Ripples of the Nile (main theme of which became a hit in 1942 when recorded by Glenn Miller as Moonlight Cocktail), Tremolo Trot(1917), Mo'Lasses(1923) and Park Avenue Polka(1949). Other works include the piano solos Spanish Venus - Tango, Railroad Blues, Nothin', Complainin', Inner Space, and Outer Space. His songs were Rockaway(1917), Billy Boy(1917), Go-Go Bug(1923), Leaping Leopards(1923), Magnolia(1926), Moonlight Cocktail(1941), Massachusetts(1942) and Exclusively With You(1949). His symphonic works include Whistlin' Pete - Miniature Syncopated Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra from 1939 and first performed at Philadelphia; and a Spanish Suite for Piano and Orch. He wrote fourteen musical comedies which were all produced.

Since suffering a stroke in 1958, he had been in relatively poor health until his death just a few weeks ago. Another ragtime pioneer is gone but he lives through the music he gave us.

TEMPO 80 JOHN FAIRHEAD

SUCCESS = FAILURE

This seemingly paradoxical equation is in fact a valid representation of the results of the operation of The Ragtime Society over the past year. Theoretically speaking, this equation can be restated Failure = Success, without changing the equality of the statement. However, as related to the "Society", this mathematical analogy apparently breaks down.

Well then; how can success = failure?

Commencing with Volume 6 Number 1, our newsletter was presented in its new magazine format, and... given a name; "The Ragtimer". This change was initiated in order to present ragtime in a manner more befitting the importance of the "art form", and to establish a significant advertising tool for use in the pursuit of ragtime penetration. In addition, as outlined in "The Ragtimer" Volume 6 Number 2, we reorganized the entire behind-the-scenes operation of the "Society", in order to facilitate the processing and filling of orders. The objective; re-allocation and redistribution of existing time, in order to create, through greater efficiency, additional time to devote to the development and propagation of ragtime. Included within this time structure was an allowance for the anticipated growth potential of The Ragtime Society.

WHAT PRICE SUCCESS?

In retrospect, this reorganization proved successful. In fact, our prime failure resulted from an underestimation of the results of our endeavours.

First, "The Ragtimer" was received with such overwhelming enthusiasm by both members and potential members of the "Society", that without the advantage of any planned membership campaign, we increased our membership by approximately sixty percent.

Promotion of "Society" records, music, services, etc., in "The Ragtimer" resulted in a staggering increase in activity in these areas, particularly in the pre-Christmas period.

Our request for membership involvement, via suggestions and comments, produced unexpected and appreciated response, and although not all of it was complimentary, it is nevertheless of inestimable value in planning and reshaping "Society" undertakings.

However, this substantial increase in activity created significant problems... and our house of cards came tumbling down.

Specifically, these were the problem areas:

(1) The new magazine format took considerably more time to "lock up" prior to printing, and consumed greater amounts of material, than originally anticipated.

(2) The exhilarating increase in membership overtaxed the revised organizational set-up.

(3) Similarly, the increase in record and sheet music orders created specific problems:

(a) Normally adequate sheet music stock was depleted on some items, necessitating extended delivery cycles.

(b) Commercially available records, ie., CL-001 to CL-022, stocked by the "Society" in small quantities, as a service to the members, were decimated by the onslaught of pre-Christmas orders, again necessitating extended delivery cycles, and in some cases, back orders.

(4) Literary involvement by members, which warranted our response, unfortunately, were not answered as expeditiously as intended.

COMPROMISE IS DEFEAT

The easy, if somewhat illogical solution to these problems, is to curtail activities in order to contain everything within the framework of the existing system. However, such compromise would adversely affect "Society" development. Therefore, the system must be modified to satisfy the need.

Now, let us examine these problems individually:

(1) To reduce executive involvement in the actual production of "The Ragtimer", all material will be typed by outside agents. Freed of the encumbrances of this undertaking the executive will be able to channel energies into more creative areas. Incidentally; all manuscripts, both original and "re-discovered", suitable for inclusion in the magazine, will be gratefully accepted.

Publishing dates have been established for the 1968 issues of "The Ragtimer", and these are as listed herein:

Vol. 7 No. 1	Mar. 16	Vol. 7 No. 4	Sept. 7
Vol. 7 No. 2	May 4	Vol. 7 No. 5	Oct. 26
Vol. 7 No. 3	June 22	Vol. 7 No. 6	Dec. 14

NOTE: Lead time for articles and information for inclusion in "The Ragtimer" is 5 weeks prior to publishing dates.

(2) New membership applications, together with a conversion of existing members' file cards to a new stencil arrangement, created a few isolated inconveniences. However, no further difficulty is anticipated.

(3) (a) Sheet music produced by the "Society" will be maintained at a higher stock level, thereby virtually eliminating a stock-out situation.

Commercially available sheet music and folios must necessarily be stocked

in relatively small quantities, because of the limited operating capital of our non-profit "Society". However, rigid stock control will reduce stock-out to a minimum.

(b) Commercially available records must likewise be stocked in relatively small quantities for the same reason stated above, and will be controlled in a similar manner.

NOTE: If for any reason a sheet music, folio, or record order cannot be filled within 14 days from receipt of order, the purchaser will be notified.

(4) To facilitate the answering of members' queries, which due to their singular interest, do not justify inclusion in "The Ragtimer", a less formal approach will be taken, ie., they will be answered in brief memo form, rather than by the more time consuming, but not more informative, letter format.

SUMMATION

The problems which I have just outlined, although annoying to both members and executive, at the time, have been used as a basis for the continuing development and improvement of The Ragtime Society, and when viewed in this light, perhaps failure can equal success, and...the 1968 operation of the "Society" will be defined with the mathematical analogy...

Success = SUCCESS

HAVE YOU SENT IN YOUR ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL? THE ENCLOSED FORM IS PROVIDED FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE. MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE NOW $5.00 PER YEAR. AS THE RAGTIME SOCIETY IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION, YOUR PROMPT ATTENTION TO THIS MATTER WILL ENSURE A CONTINUATION OF "SOCIETY" SERVICES. WRITE OUT A CHEQUE OR MONEY ORDER, FIND AN ENVELOPE, FILL IN THE FORM, AND... PLEASE, MAIL IT IN TO-DAY.

THE RAGTIME SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 520, WESTON, ONTARIO, CANADA

JOPLIN'S
EUGENIA

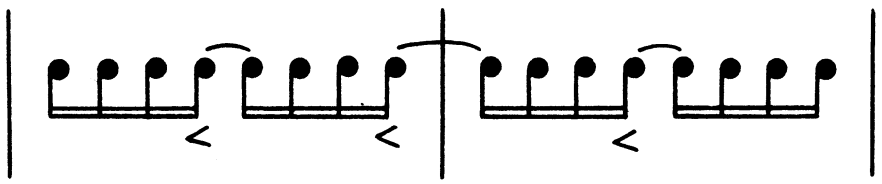
Analysis by Trebor Tichenor in collaboration with Robert Wright

1905 is an interesting year for Joplin tunes. Though none of them became as popular as some of his other works (there are no known piano roll issues of Leola, Bethena, or Eugenia), they contain some of his best writing; in addition all three seem to bear girl's names, though Eugenia might be named after the street that ran East and West behind the Rosebud Saloon. Eugenia is generally considered a 1906 Joplin rag, but it was submitted to the copyright office late in 1905. Publisher Rossitor advertised it as "rather difficult", which gives some indication that the Joplin classics weré considered harder to master in their own time, and that they were thought of as separate from the other rags.

There is a heavy, purple aura about the 1905 tunes which separates them from other Joplin rags. In a sense they continue some of the 1904 features in a new fashion, drawing most notably here on Chrysanthemum. Both Eugenia and Chrysanthemum are structured identically, ie., with the D theme having the air of an interlude.

As with most Joplin introductions, this one sets the mood, ending in a rush of 16th note bass octaves, which reappear later as a feature of the time. This structure is interesting to note, as it pops up in his rolls as transitions between themes, but is usually, except for Eugenia, notated as single notes, not octaves.

The first strain begins with a syncopated rhythm that is not unlike a popular bebop drum motif:



Compared to some other flowing opening themes by Joplin, this one is very much syncopated. The harmonics here are rather standard, but one may note a typical Joplin melodic feature in bar 7; the use of wide intervals, a feature which paved the way for modern writing and which one could reveal dramatically by singing Joplin melodic lines such as this one. In bars 11 and 12 he varied the harmonic color a bit by bringing in a Gm - Cm6 - D7 - F7 sequence which leads back to the tonic in bar 13. Here, on the last upbeat, on the B♭ 7, the treble interval voicing is the typical harmonic 4th so prevalent in blues playing.

The second strain breaks away with a simpler melodic syncopation:

broken in bars 5 and 6, and again in 7 and 8 by a more jagged

phrase over a harmonic series that is the same as the second strain ending of Morton's TANKTOWN BUMP recording, ie., the introduction of the relative minor and the dominant minor, here D7 - Gm - A7 - Dm. In bars 11 and 12, instead of simply moving to the sub-dominant, he brings in the regular II chord (Cm), leading beautifully to the dramatics of the 13th bar where both hands execute quick octaves in a Cm - E♭ - E♭m sequence, leading back to the tonic.

After the repeat of A there is a variation on the bass octave turn around, adding the 7th to get to the trio, in E♭. The trio has the fantasy aura reminiscent of Chrysanthemum. The melody is structured largely in thirds with the syncopation:

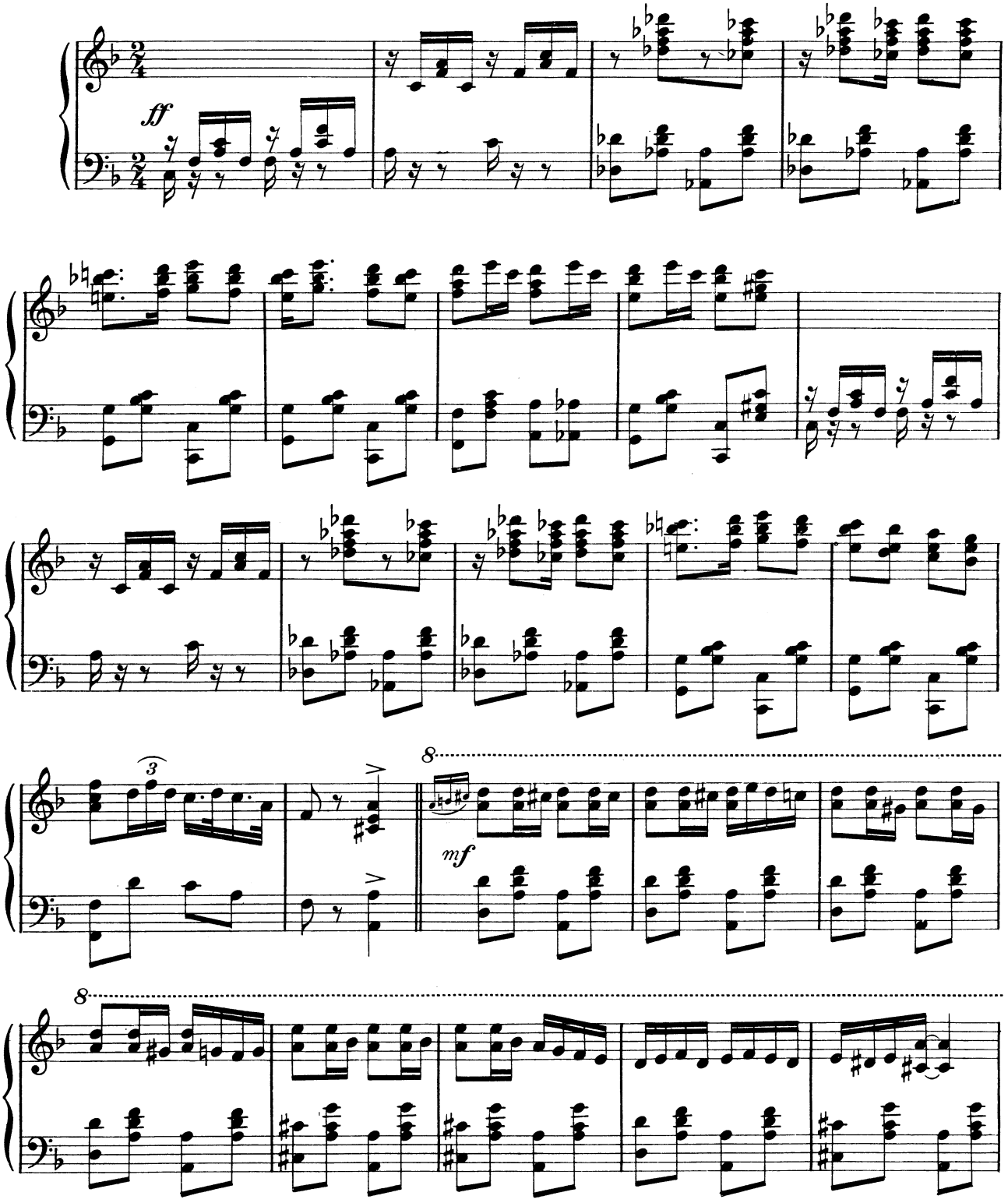
As with the second strain, pedal markings appear to help effect a legato flow. The color of the minor is used here again, complemented in bar 12 by the regular II chord (Fm), leading to a sequence much like the later Pineapple Rag final strain B7 - E♭ feature, complete here with bass octaves.

Following the trio is certainly the most interesting part of Eugenia, a 16 bar interlude, coupled with a repeat of the trio, followed by a repeat of the whole 32 bars (interlude and trio) to end the rag. This interesting bit of interlude has the aura of Frolic of the Bears from Treemonisha. In the 1st four bars it moves from a Cm to a G by way of a neapolitan 7th, here D7♭5, then from Em - F♯o to a C7♭5, ending on a B♮ in bar 8. Bar 9 turns to an implied G - D7 sequence, spiced by an interesting bass touch in bar 10, where a is played under a in the treble. In bar 12 a B♭7 is implied, leading back to E♭ and a series that brings back the trio. Thus the form evolves: A A B B A C D C D C, [NOTE: When the trio first appears there is an incorrect repeat sign (𝄆) marked at the opening of the strain]

Eugenia is certainly one of the great, reflective Joplin rags, foreshadowing some of his even heavier works to follow a few years later.

SASKATOON

(RAG)

PHIL GOLDBERG.

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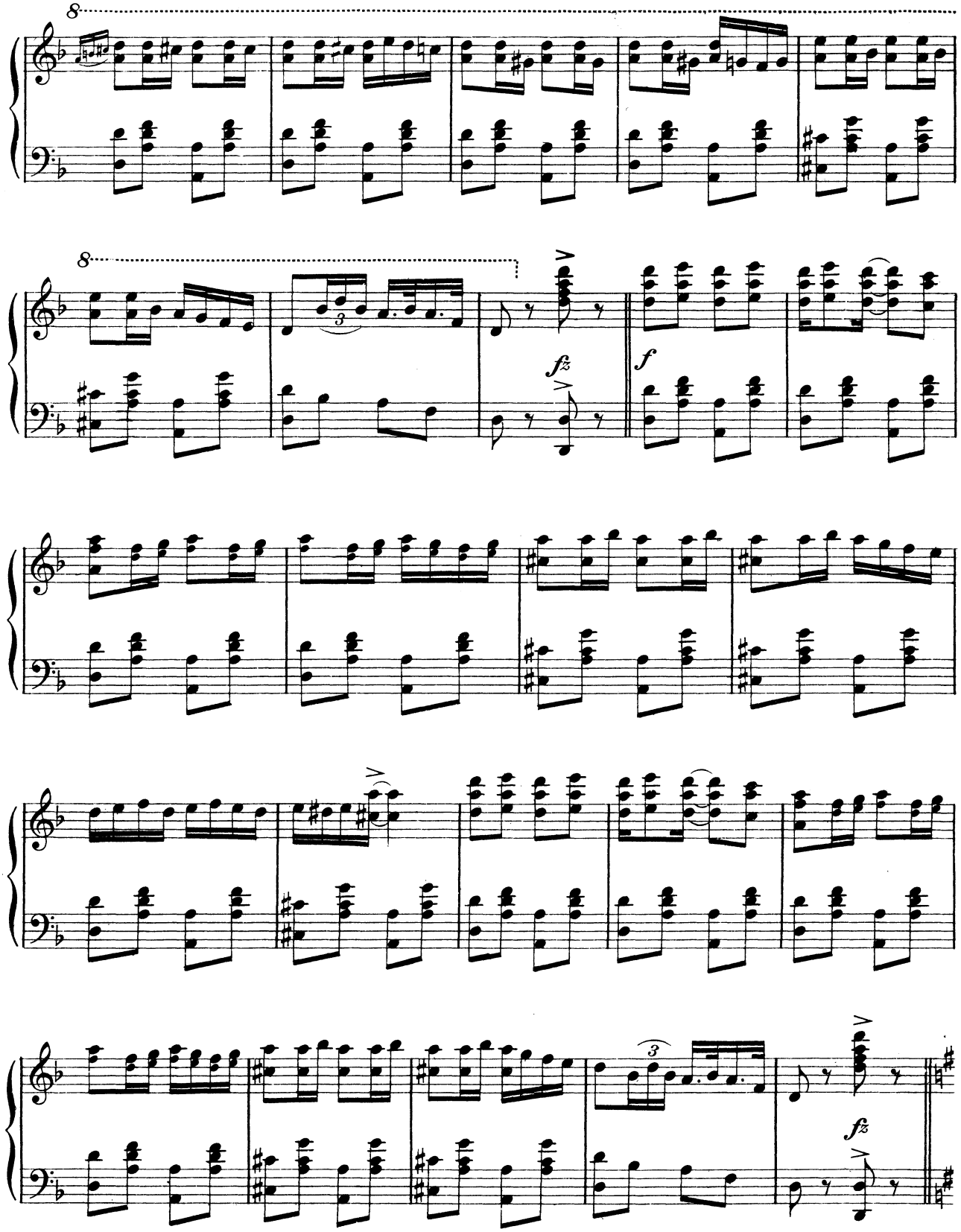
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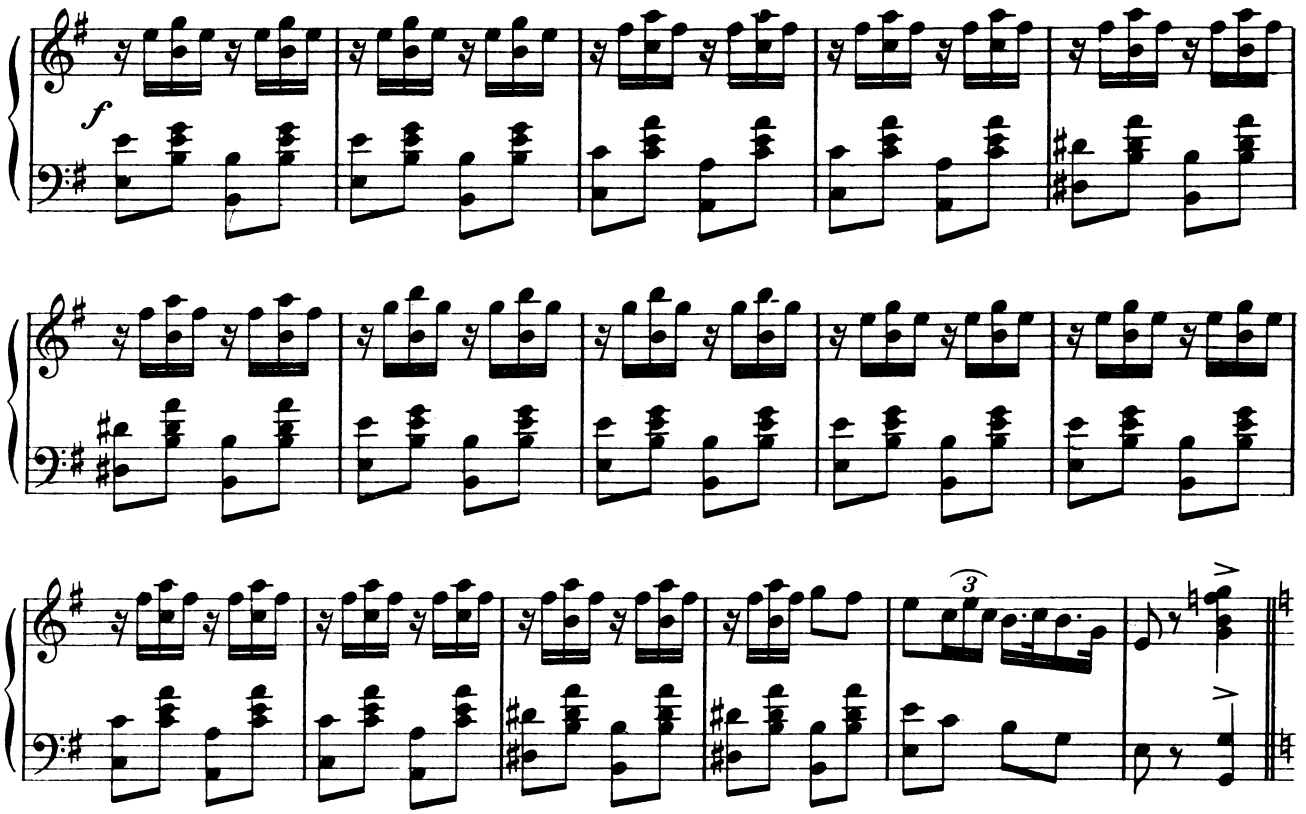
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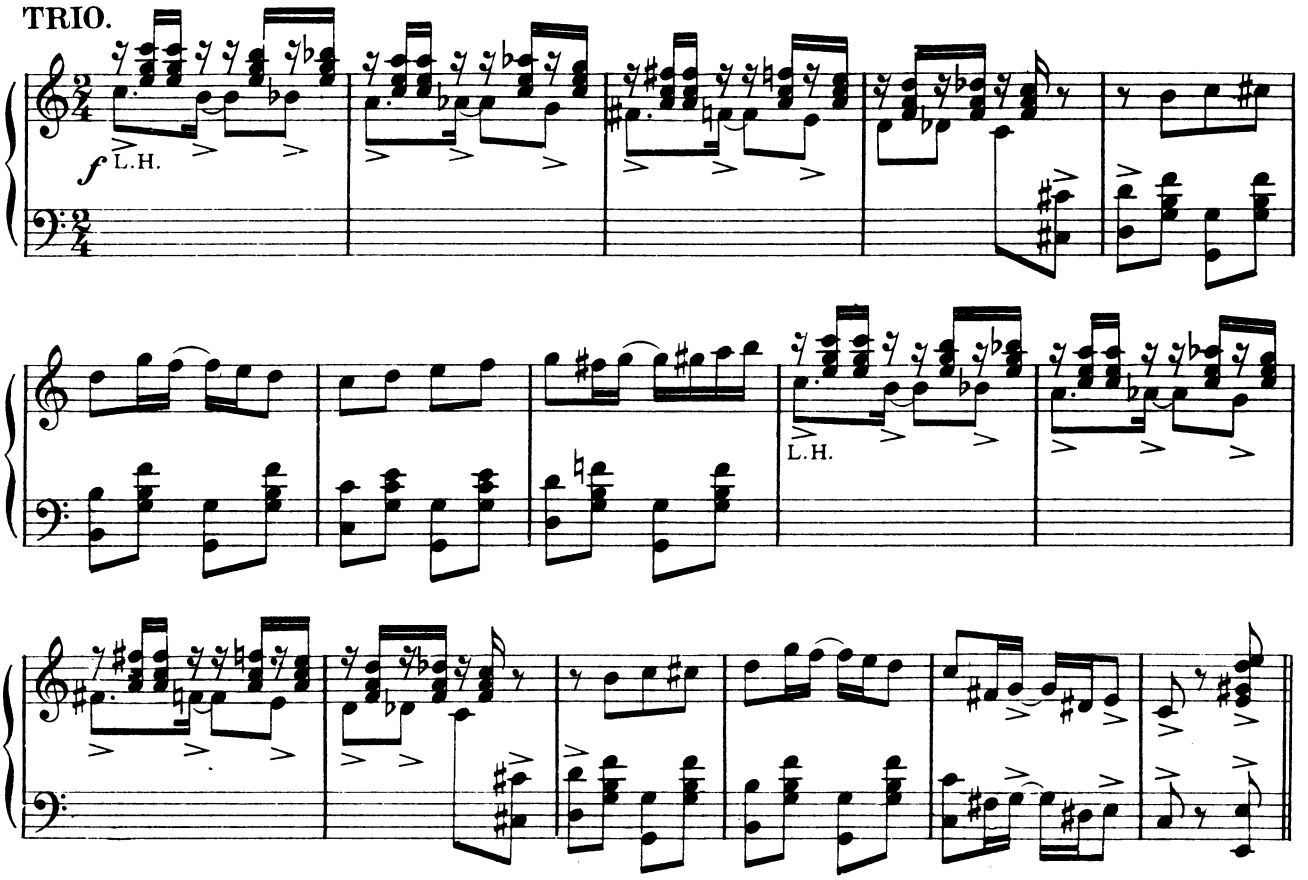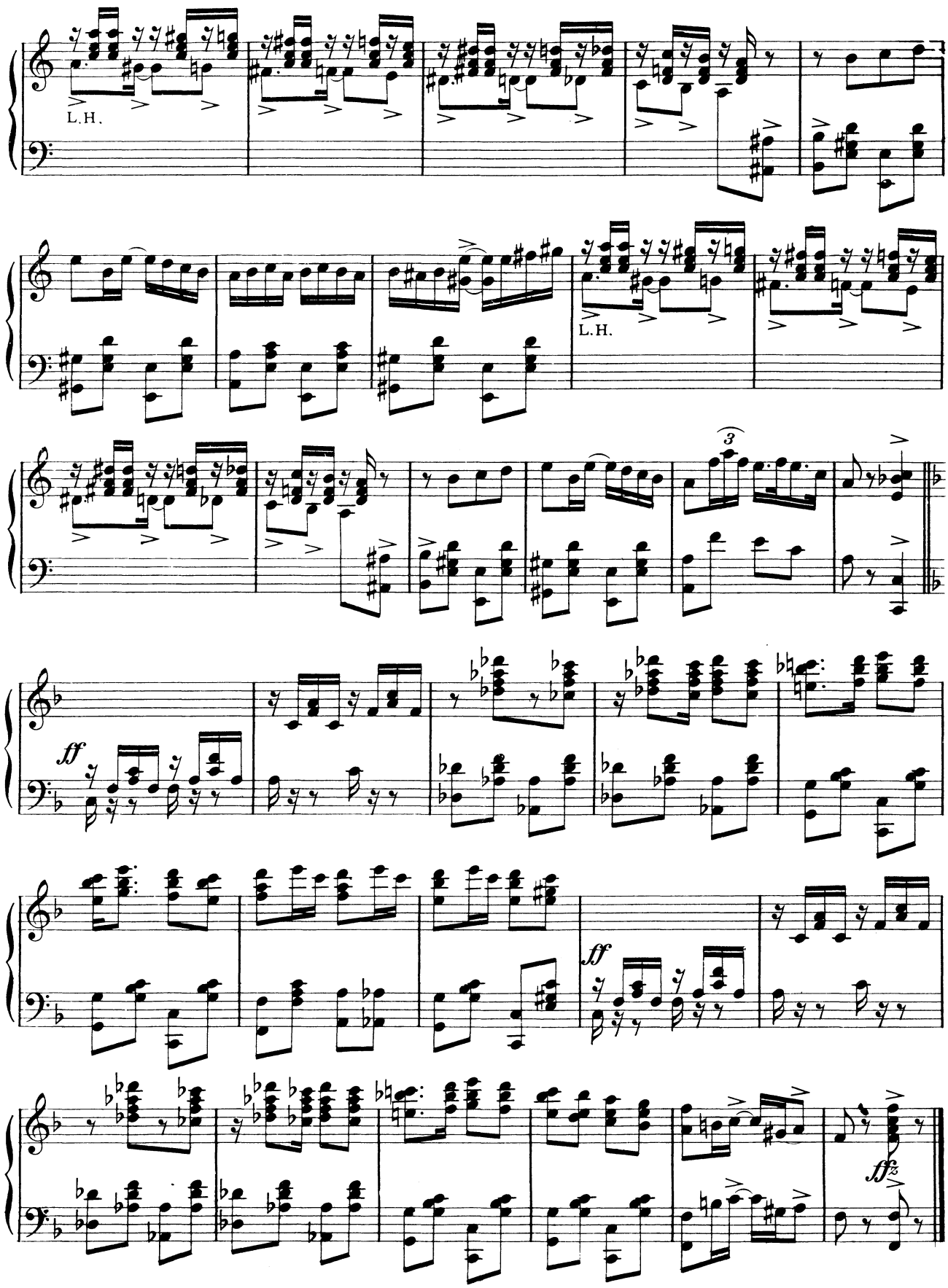
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Winging It with TOM SHEA

My sakes a'mercy! The mail is just pouring in. Here are portions of letters from three more good sports; two with opinions and one with some suggestions for me.

"So alright already, here's a letter just to keep you from losing all faith in us ragtimers.

"First of all, for lack of anything better, we should retain the term "classic" in reference to ragtime because we need some means of identifying the written work of people like Joplin, Scott, Lamb, etc., which is different from the performed work of people like James P. Johnson, Fats Waller, and others. To my mind, the recorded work of Johnson and Waller is unquestionably ragtime, referring of course to the piano solos of Johnson and the early piano solos of Waller.

"While the style played in these recordings is "Harlem Stride", the relationship to ragtime is so intimate that one might consider it as a more highly developed form of ragtime where liberties are taken with a stated theme via improvisation. A case in point is the recent Victor release, Fats Waller 34/35, which contains the solo "Blue Black Bottom". This solo is clearly in the ragtime idiom, and has the form A, A', B, C, C', B'. There is a four bar introduction and a two bar coda. Themes A and C are 16 bars long, and theme B is 32 bars long for a total of 134 bars. Themes A', B', and C' are variations with B and B' having an unusual structure, that is 24 bars of a theme followed by the first 8 bars of the same theme. In any event, this is what I call performed ragtime because a manuscript probably never existed.

"In a letter to Mr. Mike Lipskin of the Artists and Repertoire Staff of Victor, I asked about the existance of manuscripts and sheet music for the early Harlem Stride performances. He answered:

> 'The sheet music transcriptions from the Waller material you mentioned is just that; an arranger's idea of what Waller played on the record.
>
> 'Many of the James P. Johnson records are the same. In sheet music form, 90% of these tunes have been cheap imitations of the record and the only way I have learned them is to listen.
>
> 'I suggest you try to learn the tunes by ear . . . the sheet music will always be disappointing as I have found.'

"This in sharp contrast to the compositions of Joplin where we can see the composition.

"In conclusion, I guess my main point is that "classic" should refer to the printed sheet music to be played as written because there is other ragtime which was played, but

never written. It would be nice to have an accurate transcription of "Blue Black Bottom", but then the question would remain, should it be played as written?"

Sincerely,

Joseph A. Raab

Thanks for writing Joe. Your letter raises some interesting questions. For instance, why isn't a performed work like "Blue Black Bottom" that still has validity after 30 years "classic"? You yourself identify it as ragtime.

In your comments on written work you infer that the published piano score of the "Maple Leaf Rag" represents its best version since it's by Joplin. How do you know for sure that Joplin always played the "Maple Leaf Rag" just like it's on the paper? He was never recorded. What if he had been recorded somehow in a performance that was at variance with the score. If this modified version of the "Maple Leaf Rag" were still pleasing today could you honestly avoid calling it "classic" just because it wasn't written down? And if the performed version were superior to the published piano score - but let's not get into that.

What's wrong with calling written music, written; and performed music, performed? If either kind is good and lasting it can be "classic" can't it Joe?

* * *

"... I am sure that if you let the membership know what you think about keeping or dropping the word "classic"; what you think about playing a composition "as written"; or your preference for either "hot" (improvised) or "cool" ragtime; or your professional suggestions on how to learn to play good ragtime; you will then not only receive mail but also a consensus of opinion which might even furnish you with fresh ideas for future articles.

"Continue "Winging It with Tom Shea". I hope you acquire many fans in the near future who will be Winging It WITH Tom Shea."

With Best Wishes,

Sincerely,

Jorge Mills

I hope you're right Jorge because I'm going to take your advice and stick my neck out.

I think we should drop the word "classic" unless we can make it work better. As it's used now it doesn't seem to define anything much, it just intimidates people.

My personal preference is for "hot" ragtime - provided that it's authentic. Incidentally, Trebor Tichenor has a good name for it. He calls it "Folk Rag".

I can't give anyone "professional suggestions" on how to learn to play good ragtime. I think W. C. Handy had some good advice though. He said play rag as written at first to learn the idiom so that when you are able to improvise you can do it authentically. I think rag is one of several kinds of related Negro secular music and that you can improve your understanding (and therefore your playing hopefully) of rag if you spend some time with the Blues for instance. And don't forget white "country" music with those banjo and fiddle licks. It's related too.

"... Personally I do not think the word "classic" should be used in denoting any music in ragtime. I love all ragtime and like it played in various styles; yours, Wally Rose, Ralph Sutton, Knocky Parker, Tony Parenti, Turk Murphy etc., etc., etc. Each one sounds good to me and so to me each style is just wonderful."

Best to you Tom,

Your friend,

John "Pete" Schmauch

I'm with you Pete. Ragtime is to enjoy and it's a bigger idiom than just "classic". Why not enjoy it all like Pete?

* * *

Well friends of ragtime, I must say I'm overwhelmed with the response. It sure is fun to discuss ragtime with you this way. Please continue to send in your opinions, suggestions, and theories. See you next issue.

IMPORTANT MEMBERSHIP NOTICE

HAVE YOU SENT IN YOUR ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL? AS IN THE PAST, MEMBERSHIP IN THE RAGTIME SOCIETY EXTENDS FROM JANUARY 1ST - DECEMBER 31ST INCLUSIVE. MEMBERSHIP DUES, BY NECESSITY, HAVE BEEN INCREASED TO $5.00 PER YEAR (see editorial, THE RAGTIMER, VOLUME 6 NO. 4) CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE RAGTIME SOCIETY IN 1968 BY RENEWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP PROMPTLY.

RAGTIME - A Re-Evaluation

by DAVID A. JASEN

So much has been written on jazz during the past thirty years that more people than ever are confused. All terminology becomes meaningless as the basic function of communication is lost. The question of just what jazz is, has confounded most critics and writers on the subject. The impossible claims made on behalf of jazz have been responsible for the contradictory misinformation around the world.

Unlike ragtime, jazz is not a form of music. Jazz is defined not by what is played but by how it is played. Jazz music is that which is played by a jazz musician. It only exists by virtue of the musician or group of musicians creating it. The main elements contain either solo or collective improvisation on a theme to make variations and a manner of phrasing which expresses individuality through timing. The piece can be any kind of tune or in any style. Rags, marches, dances, classical compositions, popular tunes - all can be and are played by jazz bands and soloists. Since jazz is not a form but an interpretation based on some type of form, this accounts for the endless different sounds of jazz, whether it be MUSKRAT RAMBLE or GROOVIN' HIGH. It is nonsense to say that these tunes played by jazzmen bear any resemblance to each other. When played by jazz musicians, these tunes become jazz. When they are played as written, they are no longer jazz but straight compositions.

During the past seventeen years I have had many occasions to marvel at and use the excellently researched book, THEY ALL PLAYED RAGTIME. And just as frequently it has troubled me that, while all of the material is there, the conclusions drawn are illogical and erroneous. It is in an effort to help clarify this situation that I hope to briefly show what ragtime is and how it has developed.

Ragtime is brimful of exuberant energy, an extraordinarily gay, zesty music which is distinguished from all other kinds of music by its use of an extended melodic line of syncopations harmonized with a regularly metered bass. It is the truly American music, originating in large part with banjo duets in the days of the minstrel show. The folk music of the Missouri and Mississippi Valleys formed the basis of ragtime upon which were gathered hymns, marches, dances and popular tunes from the latter part of the 19th century. In the beginning, ragtime compositions consisted of the stringing together of assorted themes. These tunes were played and sung by wandering musicians who drifted from town to riverboat, from saloons to sporting houses. These musicians shared the wealth of musical ideas, as personal styles were conceived, added to and then changed again as they travelled on their journeys. The first type of ragtime, then, utilized the simple syncopations coming from the songs and dances of the working people in the rural midwest and south. The purest of the Folk-rag composers was Charles Hunter of Tennessee.

We find that the next type of ragtime, Classic ragtime, is aptly named, as the man responsible for its structure was classically trained. Scott Joplin was a musician typical of his time in his wanderings, but far from typical in his use of all of the musical resources available in addition to his own genius to solidify this material. He created a

recognizable form of music toward the end of the 1890's, integrating three or four interrelated themes. The first successful rag, MAPLE LEAF RAG, written by Joplin in 1899, sold by the millions in sheet music, and was popularly recorded on piano rolls, cylinders and phonograph discs. Throughout his lengthy career, Joplin's compositions might vary in complexity but they never strayed too far from his folk origin. His most complex rags, along with those of his followers', James Scott and Joseph Lamb, elevated Classic ragtime into the highest realm of the art form.

Early in this century, Joplin moved to St. Louis when his publisher, John Stark, set up his business there. St. Louis became the focal point of early ragtime and Tom Turpin, owner of the Rosebud Cafe, became its champion and leader. Here, all travelling musicians gathered to exchange their ideas. The most talented of the composers of the Classic style were either associates or disciples of Joplin. Among them were Arthur Marshall, Otis Saunders, Scott Hayden, Brun Campbell, James Scott and Louis Chauvin.

In the early part of the second decade, as ragtime became popular, the professional tunesmiths in Tin Pan Alley turned their creative minds to infusing their coon songs, cakewalks and ballads with this delightfully lilting music. As a result, many simple but effective rags were written while Joplin, Scott and Lamb were advancing to more intricate heights. Among those who were born in the midwest, but earned their living in the heart of Tin Pan Alley, were Percy Wenrich and George Botsford. It is interesting to note that Joseph Lamb, one of the "big three" of the Classic style, whose musical background consisted of learning Joplin's rags from the sheet music, never heard any of the folk tunes of the midwest, for Lamb was a native of Montclair, New Jersey from birth. When he arrived on the New York scene, he established a friendship with Joplin during ragtime's peak and worked under Joplin's guidance to expand its complexities.

Ragtime played in New Orleans differed considerably from Missouri ragtime. Tony Jackson and Jelly Roll Morton exemplify the former. These two men were heavily influenced by the French, Spanish, English and African music which came to that cosmolitan seaport city.

The second generation of ragmen who followed the Joplin clan were midwesterners who not only had better musical education but had the time to assimilate the original rag concept and to bring it in line with the more advanced ideas of their time. These men - Artie Matthews, Joe Jordan, J. Russel Robinson, Paul Pratt, Henry Lodge, Charley Thompson and Robert Hampton - developed a new sound to ragtime. It was more sophisticated than Joplin's but it was a sort of in-between music - between early Missouri ragtime and the more eastern playing of those in Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York.

Eastern ragtime at the turn of the century owed nothing to the folk tunes west of the Appalachians. Here was a music developed from church spirituals and from big city vaudeville. The creators of Stride, as this exciting music was called, were Luckey Roberts, James P. Johnson, Eubie Blake, Willie "The Lion" Smith and Fats Waller. Stride ragtime was essentially different from the Classic ragtime of St. Louis. Joplin, Scott and Lamb conceived their rags melodically and the emphasis was on the melodic line. The Stride ragtime emphasized the strong rhythms, letting the left hand carry the music. The logical bridge between Missouri ragtime and New York Stride was Jelly Roll's New Orleans ragtime which, while stressing melody, used a more harmonically and rhythmical bass line. The stomps of Jelly Roll became the shouts of James P. Johnson.

Just before other forms of music caught the popular fancy, a different breed of composer-pianist gave ragtime its last twist. Mike Bernard was the first followed by Willie Eckstein, Zez Confrey, Roy Bargy and Victor Arden to create what became known as Novelty piano solos. These were the blending of ragtime with the tricks of the player piano riffs, to show off the techniques of the virtuoso.

Here then are the seven types of ragtime: Folk, Classic, Tin Pan Alley, Advanced Classic, New Orleans, Stride and Novelty.

The most frequently quoted canard is that ragtime is piano music and jazz is music for the band. This, as we can see, is patently not true. Ragtime, in fact, was played by both pianists and bands from its beginning. The legend on the cover of MISSISSIPPI RAG, acknowledged to be the first rag published, reads: "The First Rag-Time Two-Step Ever Written and First Played by Krell's Orchestra, Chicago. " John Philip Sousa, Charles Prince and Arthur Pryor made phonograph recordings of cakewalks and rags, including them in their repertory when they went on their European tours, thus spreading the music far and wide.

Dance music, from the Cakewalk to the Cha-Cha, has always been the deciding factor in determining the direction and vitality of jazz. During the unsuccessful bop period when dance was absent, so was the enthusiasm - both of the music and for the music. The Cakewalk became a jazz dance, as it depended on each couple's gifts for improvising steps, struts and kicks to fit the ragtime syncopations. The early bands who played jazz took the popular dance music of the day as their sources.

That ragtime is meant to be jazzed up or improvised upon is borne out by several things. In the first instance, any musical composition written has the limitation of its being represented visually. Since music is an aural sensation, no one can possibly know how the composer really meant the piece to sound unless he played it or caused it to be played himself. Musical annotation is a very restricted convention and can only indicate superficial guides to the player. In the second place, the cutting contests - from St. Louis to Harlem - have served as reminders that all musicians were keen improvisors and those who were outstanding are clearly remembered by those musicians still alive. A significant example illustrating this point is one made by Sam Patterson as reported in THEY ALL PLAYED RAGTIME, concerning the legendary young pianist-composer Louis Chauvin:

> "'When he would first sit down he always played the same Sousa march to limber up his fingers, but it was his own arrangement with double-time contrary motion in octaves, like trombones and trumpets all up and down the keyboard.... Turpin was great, but Chauvin could do things that Turpin couldn't touch. He had speed fingering and he tossed octaves overhand. But when I think of him, it's the music I remember, and not the skill.'"

The good jazz musician is one who is not only technically proficient on his instrument, but one who can successfully and tastefully improvise within the boundaries of whatever happens to be the form of the composition. The best contemporary players of piano ragtime do not consider themselves "ragtime pianists." They are (Don Ewell and Ralph Sutton) really excellent jazz pianists. Among the more creative musicians playing ragtime today are Wally Rose, Bob Darch, Neville Dickie, Bob Greene and Charlie Rasch.

THE JOPLIN KID II

by

ALICE GREEN

At the St. Louis Ragtime Festival several persons noticed a slim, quiet boy always leaning forward in his seat to catch every note played by the piano-playing greats, Wally Rose, Bob Wright, Trebor Tichenor, Tom Shea, John Arpin. Wherever one of them was playing, there was the kid with his ears quivering and his mile-wide smile lighting up his face like a jack-o-lantern. Between times, he was circulating among the musicians listening to the conversations about ragtime, asking questions about the music, the players, the composers, the pianos and admitting that he played "a little", himself.

Then, on Saturday afternoon at the party at the Old Levee House, after several hours of the finest ragtime music in recent history, someone asked him to play. Now, it would have taken considerable intestinal fortitude for even a seasoned pro to have followed that group of players but, half apologetically, "The Kid", as he was being referred to by that time, went to the piano. And didn't he play! Oh, there was a clunker here and there and he played too fast, (at the rate he was going he could have polished off the Minute Waltz in 16.2 seconds, flat), from sheer panic, but the notes of our beloved old rags shot out from under his agile fingers like stepped-on grapes. "Dill Pickles", "Possum and Taters", "Robert E. Lee" and "Russian Rag", to the applause and shouts of the entire crowd who only reluctantly relinquished him after the third encore.

It was the golden hour of a short lifetime to Steve Spracklen, age sixteen, of Joplin, Mo.

Steve, the eldest of the five children of Mrs. Dorothy Spracklen and the late Edwin E. Spracklen, showed an interest in the piano at a very early age and started music lessons at school age. He was about seven when his mother took him to a studio on the second floor of the old Keystone Hotel to have a photograph made. Coming down to the lobby after the sitting they were greeted by the blast of a ragtime piano emanating from the Glass Hat cocktail lounge of the hotel. It was the first ragtime that Steve had ever heard and he stopped dead still, completely enchanted by the music from Bob Darch's big Cornish Saloon Grand. When Bob had finished the selection Steve tugged at his mother's hand and, with all the spirit that such a little guy could muster, declared, "Now, that's the kind of music I like". Thus was a passion born.

After another year or so of lessons, at the ripe age of eight, he delivered an ultimatum to his music teacher. He must be taught ragtime or nothing at all and that marked the end of his formal musical education. Not that the teacher disapproved of ragtime, she simply couldn't teach it, nor has he found anyone until this day who can. So there we have Steve for the next several years, with no teacher, no ragtime music, learning as best he could from the one or two ragtime records he had and an occasional sheet of music he bought or borrowed.

A couple of years ago, however, things began to pick up for him. He started finding a little more music and he began playing ragtime in earnest. Recently he has acquired access to a large collection of old sheet music and is going after it like a fiend, learning one after another of the most difficult rags and playing them note perfect.

He has one more year of high school, then he will enter Missouri Southern college with a career in law as his ultimate goal, but he hopes to combine it with a career as an entertainer as well. That's a pretty big order, but keep an eye on him. This writer will wager a dime against a gingercake that he will emerge in a few years as the piano playing-est lawyer that ever faced a jury.

And we are sure that Percy Wenrich would be proud to pass on his title of "The Joplin Kid" to such a fine and promising young fellow as Steve Spracklen.

LETTERS

With this issue, we are introducing a new department of THE RAGTIMER, "LETTERS". In previous issues, we have published excerpts from letters, with appropriate editorial comment, under the heading "RAG BAG - by JOHN ARPIN".

RAG BAG, will continue as in the past, to present capsule comments and opinions relative to membership activity, and will appear in THE RAGTIMER when suitable material is available. "Keep the RAG BAG full".

"LETTERS", on the other hand, will be published with little or no editing, and generally without editorial comment. This is your opportunity to present your ideas, comments, and observations relative to ragtime, to the membership.

In the event that your letter is not published, please do not consider this an indication of literary unworthiness, as space considerations will necessitate publishing limitations. Also, do not consider that your efforts have been in vain, as all letters are scrutinized by the executive and used as a basis for future "Society" development.

To initiate this department, we are publishing a random cross-section of letters received in response to our previous editorial, "should THE RAGTIME SOCIETY broaden its scope to include Dixieland, Blues and other forms of traditional jazz".

I read with dismay the suggestion that THE RAGTIMER expand its scope to include traditional jazz, blues and related music. I strongly oppose this idea, for several reasons, listed below not necessarily in order of importance:

(1) There has been considerable research done in these other fields. Several of the best performers have been researched to death, in fact. Many of the early records have been re-released and are readily available. In short, plenty is being done here without the Society's assistance, while virtually nothing is being done for classic ragtime and there is almost nowhere, short of THE RAGTIMER, where one can find intelligent discussion of what is being done. Much more can be done on the great ragtimers, and much more can be said about the compositions. We have plenty of worthwhile work to do in our field without taking on a broader one.

(2) The purpose of exposing jazz fans to ragtime by encouraging them to subscribe to THE RAGTIMER has little real hope of expanding ragtime interest. There are already several publications which deal with traditional jazz, i.e., THE SECOND LINE, JAZZ REPORT, England's JAZZ JOURNAL, and, to some extent, DOWN BEAT. All of these publications deal with ragtime to some extent and review ragtime records, thereby exposing their readers to the music. It seems unlikely to me that any jazz fan who is likely to subscribe to a publication to get jazz news and who might like ragtime is not already reading one of these publications, does not already know about ragtime, and is not already exploring it to the extent of his interest. By diluting our own coverage in our limited circulating magazine, we would short-change our own readers and not really expand the interest in ragtime.

(3) A legitimate study of ragtime which has any kind of reasonable scope must also embrace related music to some degree, i.e., study of Jelly Roll Morton's work cannot escape his skill as a jazzman and band pianist. We will be dealing with this kind of music enough, I think, in the course of our ragtime writings.

(4) For some reason, maybe because so many myths have grown up around traditional jazz, it seems to attract a lot of emotional, poorly informed authors with nothing new or special to say. As much as THE SECOND LINE does for traditional jazz, hardly an issue goes by without a breathlessly written, uninformed article which does practically nothing but undiscriminatingly praise any kind of traditional jazz without saying anything new, intelligent, or necessarily accurate about it. Conversely, perhaps because it takes some research even to know anything about ragtime, most of the ragtime articles, particularly those in THE RAGTIMER, are refreshingly clear, interesting and informative. I am not suggesting that our editorial standards would be lessened from the change, but I do think it would open the door to these well-intentioned, but worthless, authors who send contributions to small-budget publications such as ours. Besides, you might lose readers. We do have members who like ragtime but who don't like jazz and aren't interested in reading about it.

Don't think this means I am against traditional jazz. On the contrary, I lead a traditional jazz band, have some 1200 traditional jazz Lps, subscribe to some four traditional

jazz publications, and spend most of my spare time with the music. However, I think all this qualifies me to say that there is plenty of coverage of this subject and plenty of music, both old and new, available in this field. On the other hand, a magazine devoted to ragtime is a rarity; one like THE RAGTIMER is unique. It would be a shame to take this small publication and dilute its qualities with material which could not be significantly different from so much other stuff in the traditional jazz field.

In any event, you all do a good job. Keep it up.

Cheerfully,

Tex Wyndham

* * *

Being a new member I have been hesitant to speak my piece, but the third 1967 issue's plea by John Fairhead to write to the RS really started me thinking. Almost every issue which I have received since joining the Society (April 1967) includes comments which in effect imply that the consideration of Dixieland (which I prefer to hereafter call traditional jazz) by the Society is as corruptable as pumping raw sewerage into a mountain stream!

I agree that classic ragtime has several exclusive characteristics when compared with traditional jazz, but let's also admit that they have some things in common. Not only was traditional jazz and ragtime played concurrently in overlapping years of popularity, but many of the artists of one form played the other. (Jelly Roll is a notable example.) Traditional jazz has repeatedly borrowed from the ragtime library to produce arrangements which the general public regards as exclusive to jazz. (Sensation Rag, Tiger Rag, etc.)

Since it is the goal of the Ragtime Society to promote and preserve classical ragtime, it seems likely that they would be anxious to attract additional performers to carry the message to the public. Due to the historical interplay between the two forms, the jazzman might be your answer. Therefore, rather than slapping him in the face, a better approach would be to shake his hand, invite him in, and encourage him to listen to the way ragtime should be played.

However, perhaps it is your unspoken goal to form a Society consisting only of piano players and piano lovers, in which case I'll bow out; for what place is there for "little ole' brass man me"? Might I suggest a more admirable goal would be to consolidate. Let's face it, the masses just can't tell us apart.

But .... with consolidation comes one eventuality: If you expect the jazzman to listen to and enjoy your kind of music, he will expect you to listen to and enjoy his.

When I consider one major difference between ragtime and traditional jazz; that of improvization in the latter, I find cause to wonder -- what is the appeal of ragtime to those militant members? If the music MUST be played exactly in tempo, note for note as written, then the musician can go home while you perfect the player piano and go back to machine-cut rolls. I don't think this is the case ... individual expression does have a place in ragtime (as one will agree upon hearing Arpin's, CONCERT IN RAGTIME album).

The musical restraints are more evident, but improvization in expression is a must if ragtime is to continue to enchant new performers.

It would also seem to me that the inclusion of traditional jazz in society matters would also lend an additional benefit. If you intersperse one with the other - each played correctly in its own form - the auditory contrasts actually add interest to both. This is especially important when we face the public since their discretion is probably not as acute as ours.

Perhaps then you'll reconsider and conclude that hours of ragtime on the ivories when played at a convention might be more appealing if a few traditional jazz tunes played by responsible artists were thrown in now and then. This would definitely place a bigger burden on the convention programmers for they would have to assure an acceptable balance of presentation, but I think the overall effect would be to everyone's advantage.

Maybe if we quit bickering over a trivial point, we can settle down and really promote something. How about it partner .... shake on it?

Bud Taylor

* * *

This letter has been written as a response to the last paragraph in the column 'Under Your Hat' in the last issue (Volume 6, Number 4) of THE RAGTIMER.

To start with I was pleased to see that the executive was open enough in its beliefs to print such a challenging suggestion, however, I was extremely puzzled to find that such a suggestion could be made by any member who has ever read THE RAGTIMER thoroughly.

Any idea along the line of incorporating "Dixieland, Blues and other forms of traditional jazz" is by its very nature necessarily excluded from an organization such as ours which is "Dedicated To The Preservation Of Classic Ragtime" as our motto, which appears on the cover of our magazine, states. It is beyond my scope, at least, to extend comprehension to an idea, as put forth in the last issue, that would have "jazz talk" in an organization entitled "The Ragtime Society", with a publication entitled THE RAGTIMER, and with a constitution that states that it "is a non-profit organization for people interested in Ragtime". (As I hinted at before, someone is not reading their magazine thoroughly!) As a matter of fact I doubt if jazz would wish to be included, if indeed it had the choice.

The 'dissenters' maintain, I am led to believe, that "we broaden our scope". To remain narrow in ones scope is, I am quick to admit, inherently dangerous but WHERE, I ask, is one to draw the line? Before the enthusiasts realize it they will find reports on the latest Thelonius Monk record releases. [Here I must digress and state most emphatically that my musical interests vary widely to include nearly all forms of traditional and modern jazz. Nonetheless as wide as they may be they remain somewhat "pure" and except for historical-evolutionary interests I prefer to keep my Joplin records (not "by" but "of") separate from my modern jazz quartet albums.]

Since there are, on the market, a number of publications devoted almost exclusively to jazz (DOWNBEAT and CODA for example) I would suspect that the Society would only be repeating, and repeating probably in a second-rate way, what has and what will be printed in these magazines about jazz. I say second-rate not because the executive and its helpers are incapable of excellent performances but because the jazz scene, both old and new, is such a tremendous field to cover, they, at their present numbers and considering their other obligations, would not have sufficient time nor resources to do the calibre of job they would wish to do.

Though the point that is to follow may by some be considered extremely narrow in vision, it is to me still quite truthful. It is concerned with the problem of being recognized by the "jazz journals" and the jazz buffs (of which I am one).

By necessity they must recognize the existence of ragtime but ragtime need not tip its derby to jazz. Why? For the simple reason that jazz owes some of its origin to ragtime whereas ragtime in essence owes nothing to jazz. If a jazzman refused to acknowledge ragtime he remains forever partially ignorant of his chosen art form. A ragtime enthusiast can ignore jazz, as far as his ragtime interests are concerned, and lose nothing.

Sincerely,

Baron McCormick

An Enthusiast
Dedicated to the Preservation of Classic Ragtime

P.S. The article on Jelly Roll Morton (Volume 6, Number 1) was terrific. Play some more! Has anyone ever mentioned that you people ignore traditional jazz?

* * *

I would like to lend my support to the suggestion that several other readers have apparently made, that the range of THE RAGTIMER be expanded to include other forms of traditional jazz. I don't believe there are many of us who appreciate ragtime to the EXCLUSION of all other forms of classic jazz; and speaking for myself, I would welcome such an expansion.

Among privately circulated newsletters currently available, I subscribe to three pertaining to traditional jazz or dixieland; first, THE JAZZOLOGIST, publication of the New Orleans Jazz Club of California, which is interesting but pointed at Southern California residents. Second is George Buck's JAZZOLOGY, which is intermittent and primarily a circular advertising Buck's GHB and Jazzology labels. The third is JASS, INCORPORATED, which comes out of Minneapolis, and is also intermittent and more or less formed around the activities of the Hall Brothers Jazz Band of that city. Butch Thompson, the Jelly Roll style pianist, plays for that band.

Occasionally one of these three will have a bit about ragtime. We must grant, I think, that ragtime is a little narrow and secular, compared to the wide range of

"traditional jazz", and the time comes when you run out of things to say. As far as THE RAGTIMER is concerned, its format, composition, and art work are all vastly superior to the other three I have mentioned, and if its scope could be broadened I feel it could gain and hold a much wider circulation. The only worry I might have is that the viewpoint might be somewhat insular, your headquarters being in Canada! (With that statement I no doubt display my ignorance of the range of traditional jazz in Canada!)

Most sincerely,

William A. Goodwin

* * *

Should the Society expand its interests to cover blues, etc. This devalued opinion says "No". There are already many organizations catering for such worthy tastes.

The Society was conceived as a minority group and has been run as one. Should horizons be broadened, ragtime dedication will wane, and possibly sink slowly beneath a blues sea.

Keep your ideals
Keep your integrity
Keep your members

such as

Brian Bulgin

* * *

I see in "Under Your Hat" in No. 4 that there has been a certain demand to also include Dixieland and all that stuff.

Personally I think this would be a change in a negative direction. I have nothing against jazz from the golden era, but let us have the only special ragtime publication to deal only with ragtime. Don't split the resources. There are mags dealing with the jazz part, for example, "Jazz Report", which also has articles about ragtime, and the excellent English "Storyville".

To get the jazz buffs more interested in ragtime I think the most important way is for the members to talk about, and play some of the "giants" masterpieces in the jazzclubs I hope the Society members belong to.

As I said, I don't think the right way to enlarge the interest in ragtime is to include Dixieland articles in The Ragtimer.

Sincerely yours

Bo Esselius

REPRINT CLUB NEWS - CHAPTER IV

The second mailout in Chapter IV of the Reprint Club was sent to subscribing members shortly after the New Year. There were five titles:

(1) THE DARKEY TICKLE (Characteristic Dance) 1892 - E. B. HUNT.
(2) FOR AUNT CLORINDA'S CAKE (Two-Step) 1899 - JOS. D & KELSO MURDOCK.
(3) SOUTH CAR'LINA SIFT (Wing Dance Two-Step) 1897 - GEORGE L. TRACY.
(4) THE TEXAS TEASER (Wing Dance Two-Step) 1898 - GEORGE L. TRACY.
(5) JUST LAUGHIN (A Ragtime Tickle) 1899 - A. E. HENRICH.

THE DARKEY TICKLE is an early dance work showing some evidence of syncopation in the rag style. Incidentally, the arrangement of this number is by JOHN A. STROMBERG who is known for the numerous songs he wrote, of which MA BLUSHIN' ROSIE is the most popular. FOR AUNT CLORINDA'S CAKE is a typical cakewalk of the late '90s. SOUTH CAR'LINA SIFT and THE TEXAS TEASER are companion pieces by GEORGE LOWELL TRACY and both bear the same sub-title - Wing Dance Two-Step. They have a nice easy, syncopated cakewalk style in the KERRY MILLS tradition. JUST LAUGHIN is a Frank G. Fite publication out of Nashville and the composer was probably a friend of CHARLES HUNTER. The syncopation in the second strain is similar to TICKLED TO DEATH, which happens to be a Fite publication from the same year.

Mailout 3 is ready for posting. All four numbers are dated 1899 and are listed thus:

(1) ALABAMA BLOSSOM (Characteristic Two-Step) is by CHARLES L. VAN BAAR. He was the composer of the YALE SOCIETY TWO-STEP, a popular march from the '90s. Brooks & Denton of New York was the publisher.

(2) VIRGINIA TWO-STEP (Hotrag Swing) by HARRY H. MINCER is a delightful composition in the ABE HOLTZMANN style. The final strain is somewhat similar to the second strain of TOM TURPIN'S ST. LOUIS RAG. It was published by the Windsor Music Co. which had offices in New York and Chicago.

(3) COTTON PICKERS RAG (March and Two-Step) was written by HARRY O. SUTTON. This composer is known mainly for his composition from 1905, entitled I DON'T CARE. EVA TANGUAY, the fine female vocalist of that period, introduced the number and from that time on was called 'the I Don't Care Girl'. The harmonization of the rag is rather amateurish but the number is of historical interest. SUTTON was from Olean, N. Y. and the original copy was published there under the name of the Sutton Publishing Co.

(4) "CLEANIN' UP" IN GEORGIA (Cake Walk Patrol and Two-Step) is by HARRY P. GUY. This composer's fine waltz in ragtime style,- ECHOES FROM THE SNOW-BALL CLUB, is well known to ragtimers. An interesting comparison can be made here. Place this work alongside WM. KRELL'S MISSISSIPPI RAG and notice the similarity in structure. The key is Dm in both cases, each succeeding part moves to identical keys- (F, Bb, F and Dm), and, the idea of starting with a pianissimo vamp, building to fortissimo and tapering off to the triple diminuendo is the same. A note of interest: the cover shows that sheet music was a good advertising medium in those days. The American Tobacco Co. ad for Old Virginia Cheroots is used here by the publisher, Willard Bryant of Detroit, while down in Sedalia in the same year, John Stark used a similar advertisement for the cover of SCOTT JOPLIN'S MAPLE LEAF RAG.

In our next issue, the first of 1968, we will be saluting the females of rag composition with five new titles for the fourth mailout of Chapter IV.

HAPPY RAGGIN' !

- JOHN ARPIN -

RECORD REVIEW

by
TEX
WYNDHAM

Solo S-103, 'Suttonly', by Ralph Sutton, piano and vocal*, accompanied by Johnny Haynes, bass and Jim Lackey, drums.

Selections: Honeysuckle Rose, I'm Gonna Sit Right Down And Write Myself A Letter, St. Louis Blues, 'Tain't Nobody's Business*, I Found A New Baby, Carolina In The Mornin', Sunnie's Blues, On The Sunnyside Of The Street.

The New York style of traditional jazz piano (also known as 'Harlem stride' or 'Harlem rent party' piano) is probably the most technically difficult traditional piano style. For proper performance, the pianist must have a right hand capable of executing lightning fast runs and a left hand capable of striding tenths, octaves, sixths, fifths, and single notes, all at top speed. This style uses more complex chords and progressions than other traditional styles, and incorporates various rhythmic tricks - such as walking the bass or reversing the stride -- which were not as frequently used in the other styles. Finally, the music needs to be executed with imagination, good melodic sense, and a feeling for dynamics so that the piano sounds crisps, clean and effortless.

For many years, the New York style was thought to be of interest only to jazz fans. However, in 'They All Played Ragtime', Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis recognized that many of the best-known New York selections, such as 'Carolina Shout', 'Handful Of Keys' and 'Valentine Stomp', can correctly be called rags and that therefore the New York pianists represented an additional style of ragtime.

The prime exponents of this style were men like James P. Johnson, Fats Waller, Willie 'The Lion' Smith, and Luckey Roberts. Since their day, very few pianists have attempted the chore of learning to play the New York style. Of course, Ralph Sutton is just about the only one who has been able to master this style and make it his own.

Sutton is originally from the St. Louis area, and it is therefore surprising that he is a skilled ragtimer. In fact, in the acknowledgements to TAPR, Blesh and Janis mentioned that it was Sutton who provided a base for their musical research by performing scores of difficult rags at sight. This comment itself provides a clue to Sutton's skill, because, as most ragtimers know, it takes a talented pianist to tackle many of the classic rags at sight and still come up with a meaningful performance.

The appearance of a new Sutton Lp on the Solo label provides an opportunity to review some of the Lps which have featured this talented, and greatly under-rated, pianist. Among the Sutton Lps which might interest ragophiles are the following:

Commodore FL 30,001 'Piano Solos': Bix Beiderbecke Suite (In The Dark, Flashes, Candlelights, In A Mist)*, Boogie Joys, Them There Eyes, Sweet Lorraine, Three Little Words, When You're Smiling, Squeeze Me. (*Solo; all others with Arthur Trappier, drums.)

Riverside RLP 12-212 'Piano Solos In The Classic Jazz Tradition': Dill Pickles*, White Wash Man*, Carolina In The Morning*, St. Louis Blues*, A-Flat Dream, African Ripples, Fascination, I'm Comin' Virginia, Drop Me Off In Harlem, Love Me Or Leave Me, Sugar Rose, Bee's Knees. (*Solo; all others with George Wettling, drums.)

Harmony HL 7019 'A Salute To Fats': Ain't Misbehavin', Oriental Tones, Jitterbug Waltz, Keepin' Out Of Mischief Now, Ain't-cha Glad, Viper's Drag, Blue Turning Grey Over You, Alligator Crawl, Take It From Me, Clothesline Ballet. (All accompanied by bass and drums.)

Roulette R(S) 25232 'Ragtime U.S.A.': Eye Opener, Snowy Mornin' Blues, Alligator Crawl, Echo Of Spring, Wolverine Blues, Honky Tonk Train, Hobson Street Blues, In A Mist, Checkin' With Chuck, Rosetta, Maple Leaf Rag, Thru For The Day. (All with Jack Lesberg, bass and Buzzy Drootin, drums.)

Verve MG V-1004 'Backroom Piano': Christopher Columbus, Hindustan, Villian, Frog Legs Rag, Chromatic Rag, Grace And Beauty, The Cascades, Down Home Rag, Harlem Rag, Jelly Roll Blues, Cannon Ball Blues, Black Bottom Stomp, Cataract Rag, Shoe Shine Boy. (All solos.)

Sutton does not play rags as written, but adds his own ornate variations, played with a clean sound, a pretty fast speed, and a strong rhythmic emphasis. Lest this description offend some of the purists, let me hasten to add that Sutton is true to the spirit of the rags at all times, and turns in rollicking, enjoyable performances. Moreover, the addition of personal variations on rags is well within the ragtime tradition.

Of the records listed above, the Verve is by far the one that has the most interest for ragtimers. It is entirely a solo Lp, and contains seven classic rags from the St. Louis school, plus three Jelly Roll Morton numbers. Moreover, 'Villian' is a fine rag written, I believe, by Lu Watters, the San-Francisco-based trumpeter whose Yerba Buena Jazz Band, which included Wally Rose on piano, helped spearhead the revival of interest in traditional jazz and ragtime in the early 1940's. (Sutton's habit of humming while playing, though somewhat audible on this record, does not detract from the enjoyability of the performances.)

Unfortunately, some of the records listed above have been deleted, and all of them, including the Verve, could be a little hard to obtain. It is therefore too bad, from a ragtime viewpoint, that Sutton's new Lp on the Solo label is entirely a jazz Lp and contains no ragtime at all. The music is, however, well up to Sutton's high standard of excellence and would probably be enjoyed by any ragtimer who likes crisp, fast ragtime performances which allow the pianist some room for improvising. The album also contains Sutton's vocal debut and reveals a good-natured, rasping voice which, while not destined for musical immortality, is nevertheless fun to listen to.

- Tex Wyndham

SOMETHING DOING...

DON BURNS - appearing at the Holiday Inn, Delaware Ave., Buffalo, N. Y.

DON EWELL - appearing at the Golden Nugget in Toronto, Ont., from Feb. 12 - ?

JOHNNY MADDOX - appearing in Seattle, Washington at the Bon Marche Legend Room till March 4th. Leaving for the Orient for 4 months to entertain the American troops. Have a good trip, Johnny!

MAX MORATH - frequently on Arthur Godfrey's morning show. A good possibility that Max will be appearing shortly in Toronto. Watch for further news.

RAGTIME DOLLAR BILL - appearing at the Quality Court Hotel in Rawlins, Wyoming from February 1st for 4 weeks, then, to the Pomegranate Inn for 4 weeks at Aspen, Colorado.

WALLY ROSE - appearing at the Gold Dust Lounge, 247 Powell Street in San Francisco.

RALPH SUTTON - appearing at Sunnie's Rendezvous in Aspen, Colorado for 4 months.

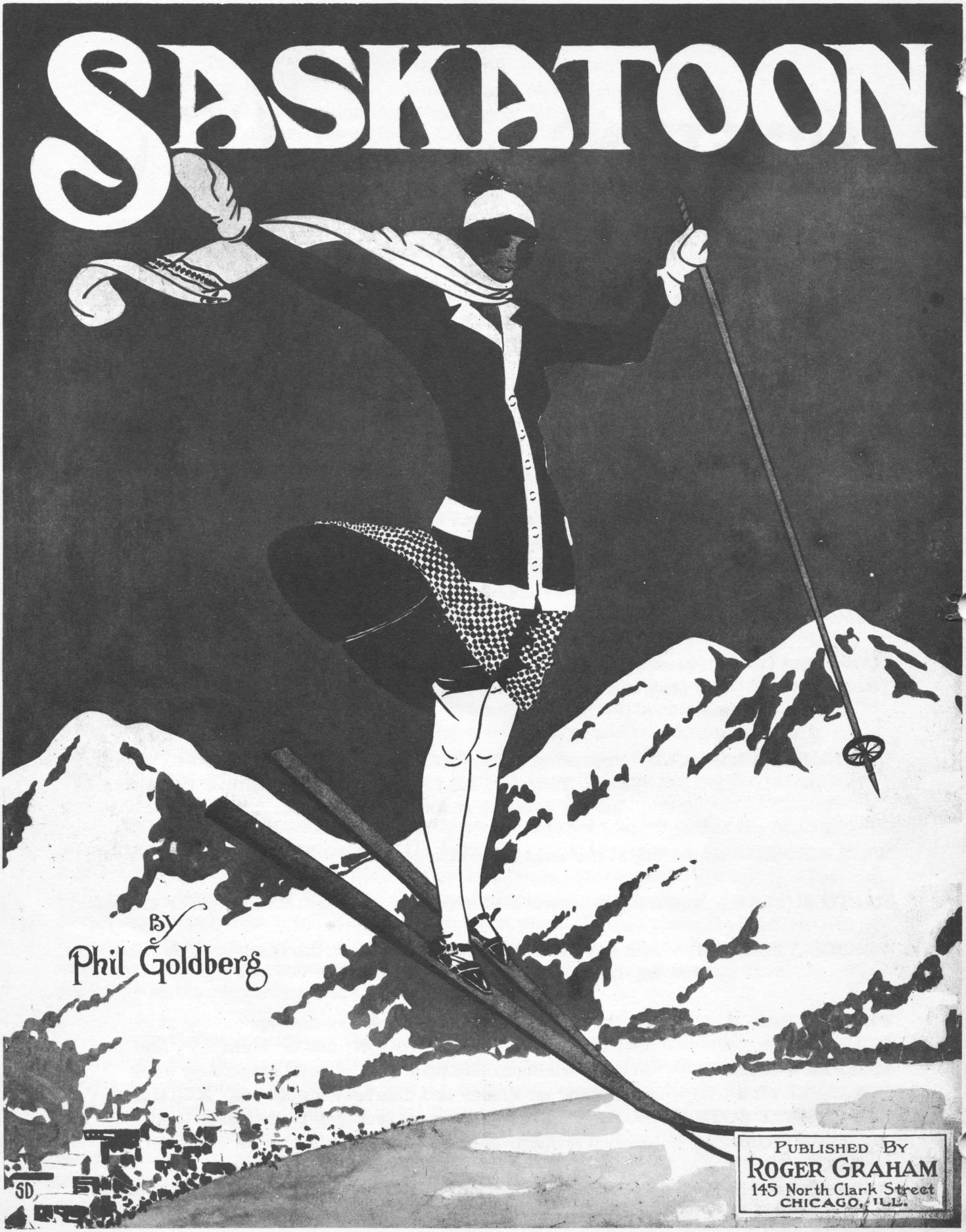
TREBOR TICHENOR - with the ST. LOUIS RAGTIMERS at the Goldenrod Showboat in St. Louis, Missouri.

CHARLIE RASCH
TOM SHEA
MOTHER'S BOYS
BOLL WEEVILS
SISTER KATE ROTH
& visiting artists

all the artists listed to the left are now appearing at LULU'S STORYVILLE SALOON, 109 S. Main St., Ann Arbor, Michigan. KERRY PRICE will sing some week nights and on Friday and Saturday nights with MOTHER'S BOYS. This establishment features traditional music exclusively and is deserving of a visit by all ragtimers.

Performers, keep us posted on your whereabouts and your schedule will appear in this column.

SASKATOON



By
Phil Goldberg

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